



Meeting Minutes

**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION
LAKE OKEECHOBEE COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, June 28, 2006, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**Indian River Community College, Wolf Technology Center, Johnson Auditorium
2400 SE Salerno Road, Stuart, FL**

ATTENDING

Lake Okeechobee Committee Members and Alternates

Barry Rosen
Kevin Henderson
Craig Tepper
Kim Shugar
Judy Sanchez

Don Fox
Roland Ottolini
Ray Scott
Joe Collins
Ken Todd

Paul Gray
David Lithgow
Doug Bournique
Richard Earp
Paul Millar

WRAC Members

Patrick Hayes

1. Welcome and Introductions – Malcolm “Bubba” Wade, Chair
Read the statutory provisions changing the meeting agenda. Added updates after Item #2, as follows: Water Conditions Summary, Water Quality/Lake Regulation Study Status; and Water Supply Policy Issues.
2. Member Issues
Status of lake regulation schedule revisions and July 11-13, Corps of Engineers’ public workshops on the “Tentatively Selected Plan” (TSP).
Barry Rosen has accepted a position with the US Geological Survey and is his last meeting. A replacement has not yet been recommended the USDOI.
3. Water Condition Summary – Cal Neidrauer
Update about the status of lake water levels.
The lake level for 6/28/06 is 12.01’, 1’ above the “Supply Side Management” zone and the lake is dropping naturally due to low rainfall.
Committee questions and discussion included :
Chance of a managed recession next year; capacity in the Upper Kissimmee basin; the need to maintain salinity at a rolling average of 10 parts/thousand (ppt). Salinities are averaging 9.1 ppt so need to maintain essential flows.
The recent analysis indicates (to member commenting) that the annual climate cycle is more responsible for the increased inflows to the lake during September-December, than flows from the Upper Kissimmee Basin. Can SFWMD incorporate “net level rise” data in the period of record to account for this?
Response: Yes, but with caveats because of limitations imposed by the data analyzed (historic vs. more recent data).
The SFWMD will post a Climate White Paper by August 15, 2006 and will be holding public workshops. The Climate Prediction Center forecast data is used to help inform decisions about lake releases. The previous lake regulation schedule had no flexibility and would likely have prevented the continuation of pulse releases to help meet Caloosahatchee Minimum Flow and Level requirements.

4. Lake Water Quality Update (Susan Gray and Kim O'Dell, SFWMD)

Water clarity has improved. Total Suspended Solids (TSS) are down to 30 parts/million and Total Phosphorous is down to 185 parts/billion from about 400 ppb.

There continues to be re-suspension of sediments and starting to see some blue-green algae blooms.

The data on macro invertebrates is very bad and fisheries are in very bad shape with little or no recruitment occurring so far this year.

Prior to the 2004 hurricanes, TSS were 20 ppt, in-lake phosphorous was at 120 ppb. What can be done to get back to those levels?

Staff will update the Committee on changes recommended for the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan at the next meeting, but there will be a challenge to meet the "Total Maximum Daily Loads" for the lake by 2015 (current target).

Committee questions and discussion included:

Phosphorous concentrations in C-23, C-24 and C-25 canals; the need to reevaluate the lake regulation schedule when the C-44 reservoir comes on line.

The Corps of Engineers selected a "Tentatively Selected Plan" and posted it to the Corps website today. SFWMD is evaluating impacts. Corps will hold public meetings, July 11 in Clewiston, July 12 – Ft. Myers and July 13, Stuart. The Corps expects to approve a new Water Control Plan in September, 2006.

We have to reevaluate the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan for reducing phosphorus loads. We need to look at enhanced "BMPs", and public/private partnerships for water storage and chemical treatment. Quantify costs and reduction efficiencies.

Agencies need to coordinate aquatic weed control activities to ensure nutrient and turbidity reduction goals are not defeated by spraying activities.

Need to look at what can be done through a revamped Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan with available funding.

There is some Blue-Green algae in samples analyze from the Lake Rim Canal and possibly microcystis toxins.

Reevaluate discharge point for water from the C-44 reservoir and connect it all the way to the Upper St. Johns River system (historic flows).

Protect Seminole Tribe water rights under the Water Compact. Revive the "Part II Hendry county Plan" to connect to the C-139 basin.

Susan Gray Lake Okeechobee recap. Over 12' with the rain. Good level for submerged aquatic vegetation. Would like to see the stage remain at 12 to see recovery. Upper Chain of Lakes is 1 foot below schedule. We will keep a good lake stage for the next month. We see improvement continuing. We are not back to prehurricane levels. There is some algae bloom in the lake, we have shared the information with Lee Co. The fisheries show no recruitment of large bass.

5. Water Supply Issues Associated with a revised Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule – Scott Burns

The first in a series of WRAC Issues Workshops was held on June 12. The intent is to identify water supply policy issues from Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule revisions, discuss with stakeholders, convey to WRAC, SFWMD Governing Board, and the forward pumps design team. Determine impacts on consumptive uses; meet 1-in-10 year level of service as required by state law. Tools include forward pumps and BMPs. Renewal of Lake Okeechobee Service Area Consumptive Use Permits next year will also enable reevaluation of new criteria. The long term direction is to move the east coast to be self-sufficient in water supply.

Questions and discussion included:

Reevaluation of Lake Okeechobee MFLs; impacts of regulatory releases for water supply and Caloosahatchee MFL needs; endangered species; reduction of per capita use of water in urban areas; 550 mgd discharged to tide as source to meet future growth; possible routing more lake water south to meet water supply needs but we have to deal with water quality; we are working to expand the STA; encourage utilities to work together to meet

projected future demand with alternative water sources vs. continued reliance on natural system; and possible recharge of canals using reuse water.

6. Review draft options paper from May 31 meeting: Discuss and Critique Objectives and Strategies

Committee agreed to cancel the scheduled July 26 meeting, and instead hold a two day meeting in Orlando, August 30-31, to review committee comments on the Draft Recommendations paper.

Members also agreed that comments should be made by Goal, Objective and Strategy letter or number. **Member comments must be provided to Rick Smith not later than Close of Business July 25, 2006. Compiled comments will be sent to members on August 16, 2006.**

Committee members also agreed that:

Comments should critique the Goals, Objectives and Strategies. It is not necessary to wordsmith each part of the paper.

Comments proposing substantial reorganization of the paper will be taken up first at the August meeting. Intent is to get agreement on Goals, Objectives, and Strategies.

Staff will check on holding August meeting at same location as "Farms to Fuel" Conference (Omni/Champion's Gate, Orlando).

Lunch: 12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

7. Agricultural "Best Management Practices", Rich Buddell, Deputy Director, Office of Water Policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Svcs (FDACS).

The FDACS Agriculture BMP Rule applied to four priority Lake Okeechobee Basins. Proposed changes expand rule coverage to all Lake Okeechobee basins. All landowners must now do site specific conservation plans. Schedule for full implementation is now 2009. Even with that it will be difficult to meet the 2015 requirement for "Total Maximum Daily Load" compliance.

Questions and discussion included:

Need for "edge of farm treatment" (to supplement new BMP requirements) vs. new fertilizer application rates and implementation of BMPs to keep soil out of the water. Concerns about "legacy phosphorous" and whether current practices would prevent further buildup of "legacy phosphorous". DEP is responsible for the implementation of urban BMPs. Urban BMPs will be implemented through the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan (LOER).

5. Stormwater Treatment Area 3-4 Report, Tracey Piccone, P.E., Lead Environmental Engineer, SFWMD

The Florida Everglades Forever Act of 1994 set interim "P" discharge limits from the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) to the Everglades Protection Area (EPA) at 50 parts per billion (ppb). The 43,000 acres of STAs built and operated by the SFWMD were achieving from 14-50 ppb. The Act also assumed a 20% reduction from the implementation of BMPs, which did not occur. The 2003 amendments to the Act updated the 1994 requirements, requiring optimization and enhancements to the Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs).

Questions and discussion included:

Appropriate sizing and operation of the STAs, increased flows to STAs from Chapter 298 drainage districts, downstream needs of the Everglades, and other features (e.g. CERP projects) that will be added over the next 3 or 4 years. Additional modeling to look at need for more conveyance and treatment capacity; other options such as storage in Lakebelt region; need presentation on 2003-2005 runoff, STA treatment capacity with STA 3-4 and STA-1W online, etc. We need to look at more storage north of lake. Hurricanes of 2004-05 damaged the STAs. Repairs, re-plantings and enhancements are being completed now.

Adjourn: 3:30 p.m.